



Zero Waste & Reuse Events

Principles of Zero Waste

(reprinted with permission from EcoCycle, Boulder, CO)

MassDEP Municipal Waste Reduction Toolkit



Redesigning Products and Packaging for Durability, Reuse and Recyclability

Instead of perpetuating our throw-away society, products would be designed using fewer material types that could be easily reused or repaired when they have outlived their usefulness.

Creating Jobs from Discards

Wasting materials in a landfill also wastes jobs that could be created if those resources were preserved. According to the report, *Wasting and Recycling in the United States 2000*, "On a per-ton basis, sorting and processing recyclables alone sustains ten times more jobs than landfilling or incineration."¹ According to the report, some recycling-based paper mills and recycled plastic product manufacturers employ 60 times more workers on a per-ton basis than do landfills. The report adds, "Each recycling step a community takes locally means more jobs, more business expenditures on supplies and services, and more money circulating in the local economy through spending and tax payments."²

Producer Responsibility

Zero Waste puts the responsibility for materials entering the waste stream on the front-end with the manufacturer, not on the consumer at the back-end of the product's life. The end result is that manufacturers redesign products to reduce material consumption and facilitate reuse, recycling and recovery.

"True Cost" Accounting

The price of a product does not currently reflect the full costs of the environmental degradation and public health impacts associated with the virgin resource extraction, processing, manufacture, transportation, and disposal of that product. When the market prices begin to include such costs, the more environmentally-friendly product will also be less expensive.

Investing in Infrastructure, Not Landfills

In many communities, strategies like unit-based pricing for garbage collection (commonly known as Pay-As-You-Throw) have created tremendous incentives for residents and businesses to reduce waste and have resulted in higher disposal diversion rates. Rather than using the tax base to build new landfills or incinerators, communities have also invested in recycling, composting, and reuse facilities. In some cases, communities have created integrated discard "malls" where various recycling and reuse businesses coexist in a location where consumers can come to drop-off any unwanted item.

Ending Tax Payer Subsidies for Use of Virgin Materials

Pollution, energy consumption and environmental destruction start at the point of virgin resource extraction and processing. Our tax dollars subsidize many industries that make products from virgin materials, such as timber and mining. Zero Waste proposes ending these federal subsidies to enable recycled and reused products to compete on an even playing field. Without the subsidies, the market can determine which are truly the less expensive products.

